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MINISTERIAL FIDELITY.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

INSTALLATION

OF THE

REV. JOSIAH HAWES,

TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THE CHURCH IN LYME, NORTH SOCIETY, NOV. 23, 1814.

BY PRINCE HAWES,
Pastor of the Church in the first society in Glastenbury.

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INSTALLATION SERMON.

REVELATION ii. 10.

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.

AFTER the Lord Jesus Christ had ascended to heaven, he appeared, in a vision, to his servant John, in the isle of Patmos, where he had been previously banished for preaching the gospel. Having proclaimed himself, "The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Almighty," he delivers to his faithful servant, a message, for the seven churches of Asia. A separate message, for each church, was copied from the mouth of the Lord, and then directed to the seven Angels, or Ministers, to whose special care these churches were committed.

The words of our text are included in the address, which was sent to the minister of the church at Smyrna. "And unto the Angel of the church of Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

This message, when received by the presiding minister at Smyrna, was doubtless communicated to the church under his care. And it may be supposed to contain a word of instruction and encouragement, to both minister and church.

The words of our text might be profitably illustrated with reference to a church, taken collectively, to an individual christian in a private capacity, or to a minister of the gospel. On the present occasion they will be considered principally with reference to the last. Yes, brethren, we may hear a voice from heaven, saying to every one who is called to minister in holy things, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." While considering these words, with reference to a minister of the gospel, two things will naturally claim our attention.

I. The duty enjoined; "Be thou faithful unto death."

II. The reward promised to a compliance with the duty. "I will give thee a crown of life."

I. We are to consider the duty enjoined in the text. The injunction upon every minister of the gospel is, "Be thou faithful unto death."

Fidelity is a desirable trait in the character of any man, whether he be called to act in a public, or private capacity; but especially in one to whom is committed an important trust. It is desirable, in civil rulers, to whose management, are committed the concerns of the public. It is desirable, in the instructors of colleges, academies and schools of learning, who are entrusted with the education of children and youth. It is desirable, in parents, who are placed at the head of a rising family. But it is most of all desirable in a minister, who is called to teach his fellow-sinners, the way to heaven. He is entrusted with the care of im-

mortal souls, and is placed in a station, where his faithfulness or unfaithfulness, will affect the condition of a vast multitude beyond the grave.

What, then, are the duties required of a minister, in order that he may be accounted faithful?

1. We say, he must fully and plainly preach the gospel of Christ. And here, it is evident, that he who ministers in holy things, he who is called to preach what God commands, is not at liberty to teach for doctrines the commandments of men. He is not, for a moment, to listen to those, who would persuade him to betray his solemn trust, saying, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits." There have been some, in every age of the world, who would more readily embrace those doctrines, which have their origin in human depravity, than those which are from heaven. These will endeavor to entice God's ministers, to throw aside the gospel, and prophecy only those smooth and deceitful things, which are agreeable to the carnal heart. But he who would be a faithful minister, will not listen to their enticements. The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Gallatians, expresses his surprise, that they should so soon be seduced by false teachers, and holds up to the view of every minister, an awful warning, not to pervert that gospel which is committed to his trust. His language is, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him, that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Every minister of Christ, if he would be accounted

faithful, must in his preaching, take the word of God for his guide. From this sacred treasury, all his encouragements, all his instructions, all his reproofs and all his warnings must be drawn. Nor must he handle the word of God deceitfully, and endeavor to make it speak a language which it does not contain. As he is a witness for God, under the solemnity of an oath, he is to "speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." He must preach no doctrine, which is not contained in the sacred volume; this would be adding to the things which are written in this book. Nor must he omit any doctrine which is there found; this, would be taking away, from those instructions, which are designed for us and for our children. He must so fully preach the gospel, that at the close of his ministry, when about to depart and give an account of his stewardship, he can say to his people, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

It will not be expected, on this occasion, that we should go into a particular enumeration, of all the doctrines which the gospel contains, and which a minister is bound to preach. We mention the following as being essential, and leading truths in the christian system. The being and perfections of God —His eternal existence, in three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—The primitive purity of man—His total depravity after the fall—The divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ—The divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the absolute necessity of his special influence to renew and sanctify the hearts of men—The necessity of repentance, faith and good works—The perseverance of the saints, in holiness unto eternal life—The eternal and unchangeable counsels of God—Predestination and election—The free-

agency and accountability of man—The resurrection of the dead—A future judgment—The final separation between the righteous and the wicked—The endless happiness of the one and the endless misery of the other. These, brethren, are doctrines, which a minister, who would stand approved in the sight of God, must not shun to declare. While preaching the everlasting gospel, he may, indeed, consistently with fidelity, choose acceptable words to convey his instructions; but in doing this, he is by no means to conceal the truth. He is not to account any doctrines which are found on the inspired page, among those secret counsels of the Most High which are to be excluded from his public discourses. "Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children." Some have supposed, that a minister is authorised, from this passage to pass over important truths contained in divine revelation and give them no place in his public instructions. But we think this supposition is altogether without foundation. It is evident, the inspired writer, here places those secret things, which belong to the Lord our God, in opposition to those which are revealed. Of course those things, which are revealed, or in other words those things which are contained in the holy scriptures, are not among the secret things to which the prophet had reference. The secret things mentioned in this passage, which belong to the Lord our God, we cannot exhibit to our hearers, because they are not found in divine revelation. It would be presumption in us, to meddle with those secret counsels of the Most High which are known only to himself. But the doctrines, which are contained in the gospel, are not among the secret things; these, are clearly revealed, and consequently are for us and for our children.

The holy bible contains no doctrine, which infinite wisdom, did not think best to reveal. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." How inconsistent, then, is the opinion, that a minister may be faithful, in his preaching, and yet omit important truths, which he knows, and which, the world must know, God has revealed? How inconsistent the sentiment, that certain doctrines, which are found in the gospel, are so unprofitable, that they ought to be entirely suppressed? If, my hearers, we say that God has revealed truths, which are unprofitable, and which ought not to be known, we call in question his wisdom. Yea; we charge the infinite God with folly. He has given us this revelation, for our instruction, and he has included nothing in it, which he deemed superfluous.

Were we to admit the erroneous opinion, that a preacher might lawfully omit some doctrines which God has revealed, we ask how it shall be determined, what may be lawfully omitted? Is he to be guided by the feelings of depraved men? Here we find one opposed to the doctrine of total depravity. Another to the doctrine of regeneration. Another to the perseverance of saints. Another to the divinity of Christ. Another to the sovereignty of God. And another to the future endless punishment of the wicked. Indeed, there is scarcely a doctrine in the gospel, which does not receive the opposition of unholy men. On the principle then, that part of the gospel may be passed over, we have no bounds, and may continue to expunge one doctrine after another, till no traces of the gospel are left. When we once begin to cut the

leaves from our bibles, and cast them into the fire, we shall never know where to stay our hand, till we have committed the whole to the flames. Besides, we say, further, it is impossible, in a land of bibles, for a preacher, wholly to conceal the doctrines of the gospel. These are revealed, and will stand upon the pages of inspiration, as long as the world shall stand. If men search the scriptures, as they ought, they will know that these doctrines are there, and if the preacher has not brought them to view, they will know that he has not been faithful to his solemn trust.

We say then, a minister has no authority to omit, or endeavor to conceal any doctrine of divine revelation. He is a steward of the mysteries of God, and "it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." And as he is to preach the whole gospel, it is evident, he is not to dwell upon one doctrine to the exclusion of others. He must "study to show himself approved of God; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

No truth is to be neglected, because it is displeasing to the carnal heart. Every minister ought, indeed, to pray that his hearers may be pleased with the truth; but he is not to refrain from preaching the truth for fear of exciting their displeasure. He is not in this sense to be a man-pleaser. Saith the Apostle, "As we are allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God who trieth our hearts.—For do I persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ." Thus tho' a minister should endeavor by every lawful method, to secure the affections of his hearers, yet

this desirable object, is not to be sought, at the expence of his duty, the sacrifice of a good conscience and the approbation of his Judge.

What has already been said, we think sufficient to show, that a minister, in order to be faithful, must "not shun to declare all the counsel of God." One observation more will conclude what we have to say respecting his public preaching. That is, that he use great plainness of speech. If he speak to his people, in a language which they do not understand, he is the same to them as one who speaks in an unknown tongue, and the effects of his preaching are wholly lost. It is therefore of the first importance, that his style be adapted to the capacity of his hearers. No saving benefit, can be derived, from the most excellent discourses, if they are not understood. A minister may preach all the doctrines of the gospel, and yet do it in a style so far above the capacity of his hearers, that his meaning will not be perceived. In this case, though he declares the truth, yet his preaching cannot be profitable. Saith the Apostle, "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—And my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." Here is an example for every minister of the gospel.

Thus we have considered ministerial fidelity, as it respects the preaching of the word.

2. If a minister would be faithful, he must be concerned to know the spiritual state of his flock. He

must not be unmindful of the admonition, which the holy Apostle gave the elders of Ephesus, in view of his final departure. Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over whom the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. Sensible of the worth of immortal souls, and the solemnity of his trust, he must not be indifferent to their eternal salvation. He must use every lawful exertion, for the everlasting welfare of those committed to his care. Hence other labors will necessarily devolve upon him besides those performed upon the sabbath. Not knowing how soon death will bring his ministry to a close, he must "watch for souls as one who expects to give an account." He must not only preach the word, but "be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." As far as practicable, he must seek to know the state of every family, and every soul committed to his charge. If health and other circumstances permit, he may spend a portion of his time among his people, attending religious meetings, visiting from house to house, counselling, exhorting, and warning every one as opportunity presents. As there are those, who are wholly indifferent to the salvation of their souls, whose manner it is to forsake the assembling of themselves together, he may by this means have opportunity, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, to some who seldom or never appear in the sanctuary of God. And who knows, but some of these, when they see how much their spiritual watchman is interested in their immortal welfare, will awake to a sense of duty, and feel a degree of concern for their own salvation? But though such should not be reclaimed, the watchman,

having given faithful warning, will not be crimsoned with the blood of their souls.

He must be ready to minister to the sick and distressed, to pour the consolations of the gospel, into the hearts of the afflicted, to lead enquiring souls to a crucified Saviour, and to warn sinners of every description, of the awful consequences of their impenitence. If they perish in their sins, if they fall under a tremendous doom, he must leave them without excuse.

3. If a minister would be faithful, he must administer the ordinances that Christ has appointed, and carefully maintain the discipline which he has instituted in his church. The holy sacraments, of baptism and the Lord's supper, are to be administered to the proper subjects. The sacrament of the Lord's supper, is to be administered to visible believers, who have taken upon them the covenant of God; and the ordinance of baptism to believers and their seed. These ordinances can be properly administered, only by a minister or a bishop, who has received regular ordination. And it is his duty, not only to attend to these, but to see that gospel discipline be maintained in the church over which he is placed. A church, that disregards christian discipline, will soon forfeit its character, and have nothing to distinguish it from the world that lieth in wickedness. In this condition, it will resemble a garden, which is left without cultivation, which is all grown over with noxious weeds, or which is trodden under foot by the beasts of the field.

The minister, therefore, who is to take the oversight of the flock, must look well to the qualifications of those who offer themselves as candidates for the holy communion. He must here make a difference between the holy and the profane. He must admit

none into the church of Christ, without satisfactory evidence that they are his disciples. And when admitted, he must see that they walk worthy the vocation wherewith they are called. After all his vigilance and care, there will doubtless be some, who are not real christians, and there may be some, whose conduct is such, as to call for the censure of the church. In such cases, that course of discipline is to be pursued, which is pointed out in the gospel. Directions, on this head, are found in the following passages. Saith our blessed Saviour, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Saith the Apostle, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.—And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed.—A heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." If then there are disorderly members, or heretics in the church, it is the duty of the spiritual watchman, to see that proper steps be taken, if possible to reclaim them, or if they cannot be reclaimed, to cut them off from christian fellowship and communion. The church is not to retain in its bosom, those who reject the essential doctrines of the gospel, or who, by their vices, prove themselves to be enemies to the cross of Christ.

4. If a minister would be faithful, he must be careful to maintain a christian deportment. In vain does he preach, if he does not, in all things, show himself a pattern of good works. There must be a manifest correspondence between his preaching and his practice. He must regulate his own conduct, by those divine and heavenly precepts, which he recommends to his hearers. He must be one to follow his own instructions. In meekness, in purity, in temperance, in gravity, in patience, in heavenly-mindedness, yea in all things, he must be an example to the flock. In his general deportment, he must exhibit evidence, that he is an experimental christian, that he has felt the power of religion on his own heart, and that he means to live, and act under its blessed influence. If he would hope for success in his preaching, he must prove by his example, that the spirit and temper of the gospel have been wrought in his heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost. His hearers must know that he can condemn vice, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. While he, in his public discourses, recommends the christian graces to his fellow-men, he must see that they adorn his own character. And while he fervently prays for the salvation of sinners, and warns them to flee from the wrath to come, he must take the path to heaven himself, and say to a thoughtless world, this is the way, walk ye in it. He must be a burning and a shining light in a benighted world, holding forth the word of life, to those who are perishing in darkness. While professedly travelling the way to glory, his path must be that of the just, shining more and more to the perfect day. Thus my hearers we have considered what is included in ministerial fidelity. We proceed in the

II. Place, to consider the reward, which the great

head of the church, has promised to a faithful minister. This, brethren, is a crown of life. The christian minister will be greatly disappointed, if he expects, in a world of sin, to execute the duties of his station, without being called to encounter difficulties and trials. He may not, like most of the primitive preachers of the gospel, be called to resign his life, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. But it would be remarkable, if when his ministry comes to a close, he could testify, that he had suffered nothing for Christ and the gospel. But though trials, of some kind, be the portion of the faithful minister, yet, blessed be God, he shall not fail of his reward. He does not labor, contend, and strive, in vain. Whether we consider him as laboring in a vineyard, as running a race, or as engaged in a warfare, let him but persevere, and continue faithful unto death, and his Lord and Master will bestow upon him a crown of life. This in other words is called a "crown of righteousness" and a "crown of glory that fadeth not away."

It is easy to perceive, that this blessed promise is expressed in figurative language; and is designed to represent, the honor and dignity, the glory and felicity, which Christ will bestow upon his faithful servants at the last day. Yes, brethren, the faithful minister, having finished his labors and toils, having fought the good fight, and finished his course, shall receive a crown; not like the garland of flowers, which the victor obtained in the Grecian games. A crown like this would soon lose its beauties and fade away. Not like the crown which is placed upon the head of an earthly monarch; this, though it may dazzle for a moment, must shortly lose its lustre, and all its glories perish. But there shall be placed upon his

head, an unfading crown; a crown which shall remain untarnished, when all the charms and splendors of earthly crowns shall have departed forever.

The Apostle Paul, as his ministry drew to a close, consoled himself with the consideration that he should receive this crown. Saith he "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."

The faithful minister shall not only have a crown, but it shall be "a crown of life, a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Christ the chief Shepherd, will not only acknowledge his faithful ambassadors, but he will give them to share in the distinguished honors and glories of his kingdom. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as stars forever and ever." Yes, my hearers, the minister who is faithful unto death, shall not be a cast away, nor shall he lose his reward. He has a glorious inheritance reserved for him in the heavenly world. In the last great and solemn day, he will be welcomed with "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He shall enter that kingdom, where labors and toils where suffering and death are known no more; and where he shall enjoy, without interruption, the blessings of life eternal. In heaven he shall meet his spiritual children, who with him shall join the society of all the good, and live and reign with Christ to all eternity. Such, brethren, is the reward of every minister who is faithful unto death.

In review of our subject we are led to remark,

1. That the fidelity of a minister will materially affect the condition of his hearers in the world to come.

There is little reason to hope that all will receive saving benefit from the ministry of reconciliation. The most persevering and faithful labors will not save a single soul from death, without the blessing of God. Ministers are nothing more than instruments, by which God carries into execution his gracious designs. The blessed treasure of the gospel is committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of men. "Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase."

Like the prophet in the valley of vision, it is the duty of ministers to prophecy upon the slain, and to say "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord;" but the power of God alone can render the word effectual. Never till the spirit of the Highest breathes upon them, will dry bones revive and live. The most friendly entreaties, the most affectionate calls, the most solemn warnings, and the most awful considerations, will not, of themselves, awaken sinners from their death-like slumbers. They will never awake from their stupidity, they will remain as they are, "dead in trespasses and sins," till they are quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is not, however, the less important that a minister be faithful, because he is not able, by his own exertions, to effect the salvation of sinners. On faithful labors only have we any reason to expect the blessing, and on these the blessing is usually, in some measure bestowed. Though God acts as a sovereign, the faithful servant of Christ will doubtless see some fruit of his labors. And though the majority of his hearers should misimprove his ministry and perish in their sins, yet he shall not labor altogether in vain, and spend his strength for nought. He will, in all probability, be an instrument in the hand of God, to

prepare some precious and immortal souls for the endless blessedness of heaven.

Nor will his ministry be wholly without effect, as it respects the condition of those who reject the offers of mercy and die in their sins. It will render them inexcusably guilty, and awfully aggravate their future doom. Saith the Apostle, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. In the one, we are the savor of life unto life; to the other, the savor of death unto death." We say, then, that the fidelity of a minister will materially affect the condition of his hearers in the eternal world. They will be more happy, or miserable, according as they improve or abuse the light and privileges with which they are favored.

2. If fidelity is a desirable trait in the character of a minister, then his people should be extremely cautious how they hinder his faithfulness.

It is sometimes the case that depraved men murmur and complain, merely because a minister is faithful; and instead of affording him their aid and encouragement, throw every possible obstacle in the way of his fidelity. They render hatred for his love, evil for his good, and reproaches for his prayers. Did they realize the importance of his trust, did they consider the solemnity of that account which he must render in the judgment day, would they complain of his faithfulness? Would they endeavor to draw him aside from the path of duty? If they saw the Judge enthroned, and guilty millions trembling at his tribunal, could they have the most distant desire that their minister should pervert the gospel of Christ, or conceal any of its doctrines? Would they say to him, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits?" Were they

sensible that by unfaithfulness, he would bring an awful weight of guilt upon his own soul, and be instrumental of plunging many of his hearers into endless torments, would they wish him to be unfaithful? Hard and unfeeling must be that heart, which can tempt a minister to betray his solemn trust. Those who can be guilty of such a deed, not only prove that they have no just conceptions of the responsibility of his station, but also that they have no realizing sense of eternal scenes.

A people, if disposed, may do much to aid and encourage their minister in his important labors. Persuaded that they approve of his fidelity, that they are with him in heart, that they are ready to afford him their aid, his heart is encouraged, his hands are strengthened, his labors become comparatively light, and difficulties, which would otherwise appear insuperable, vanish away. Under such circumstances, he can go forth to his work with courage and animation.

On the other hand, a people may do much, if disposed, to dishearten and discourage their minister. They do this, when they endeavor to encrease the difficulties and trials which he must encounter in the faithful discharge of duty. They do this, when they become his enemies, because he tells them the truth. If they oppose him, because he preaches the gospel in its purity, if they reproach him because he bears a decided testimony against vice, or if in any case they endeavor to persuade him, that prudence points out a different course of duty from that which the gospel prescribes, they oppose his fidelity.

If then a people would not pierce the heart of their minister with many sorrows, if they would not cause his soul to weep in secret places, let them not, by

their stupidity and ingratitude, encrease his difficulties and trials. Let them never cavil and object when he preaches the unsullied doctrines of the gospel. Never complain, when he warns the wicked in view of a judgment to come, to forsake their evil ways, and denounces death and destruction on the finally impenitent. As it is desirable he should save his own soul, and the souls that hear him, let them encourage him in his fidelity.

3. If a minister and people are mutually faithful, they will meet each other with sensations of joy in the day of judgment.

Fidelity which is so desirable and important in a minister, must be deemed of no inconsiderable consequence in a people. Their spiritual watchman may be concerned for their salvation, he may be fervent in his preaching, in his exhortations and in his prayers, but if they have no concern for themselves, they will assuredly perish. If they remain at ease in their sins, without any disposition to enquire what they shall do to be saved, their perdition is inevitable.

Some who have attended upon a preached gospel for a number of years without any saving benefit to their souls, may be disposed to complain of their teachers; but the fault may, notwithstanding, be in themselves. It is possible they have attended with wrong affections of heart, and without the least desire to receive the blessing of God. Saith the Apostle, "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." However faithful a minister may be, if there is no fidelity on the part of his hearers, though he will deliver his own soul, they cannot expect to be profited. But O how blessed, where both minister and people shall be found faithful unto death? The time is fast hastening, when

they must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. The faithful minister will there stand approved; and if his people have faithfully improved his ministry, they will have a joyful meeting. The minister approaching the holy Judge, with humble confidence, will say, here am I and the children which thou hast given me; and the people will rise up and call him blessed. Brethren, without attempting to describe this delightful scene, we shall leave it to be realized by those who are found faithful unto death.

We shall now close this discourse, first by an address to the Pastor elect, and secondly to the church and congregation, who are deeply interested in the transactions of this day.

My Dear Brother,

This is to you an interesting and solemn day. The consequences of the connexion which is now about to be formed between you and this people, may be lasting as eternity itself. You are now to be placed over this people in the Lord. Here are some of the precious and immortal souls to be committed to your care. Yonder is the judgment-seat, where you must meet to give an account. O how solemn the thought, that the transactions of this day are recorded in heaven, and that the consequences will be realized, when these visible heavens shall be no more!

Being called to labor in this part of the vineyard, we sincerely hope, and fervently pray, that you may enjoy the presence of the Great Head of the church, and that your labors among this people, may be owned and blest. You have doubtless felt more deeply than has been described, the importance of ministerial fidelity. We trust the cause of Christ lies near your heart, and that to advance this cause, will be the rejoicing of your soul. You will ever feel your de-

pendence upon the grace of God for success in your ministerial labors. You will not only preach therefor, but pray. And who knows but you may have the satisfaction to see the work of the Lord prosper among this people? O my brother, how joyful and animating is the consideration, that you may meet some of these souls in glory, who shall be given you, as the fruits of your labors? But whether they are saved or lost, you are to be faithful. When you come before this people, in the name of the Lord, you are to realize that their souls are precious, and have ardent desires for their salvation. You are to preach, reprove, exhort, and warn, in view of a judgment to come, and the solemnities of the eternal world. In view of every thing that is precious, in view of the dying love of our Redeemer, in view of every thing that is solemn, in view of the joys of heaven, and the miseries of hell, you are to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. And now, brother, we commend you to God and to the word of his grace; and for your encouragement and comfort, only listen to him that speaketh from heaven, saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Brethren and Friends,

You have heard what it is for a minister to be faithful. A minister, thus faithful, is one of the richest blessings which heaven can bestow upon a people. O then be entreated, to pray for your minister, and do all in your power, to encourage his fidelity. Be willing that he should declare unto you "all the counsel of God;" and never cavil, or complain when he preaches any doctrines, which are found in the gospel of Christ. And while your minister watches for

your souls, be not indifferent to your own salvation. If it is his duty to preach, it is your duty to hear, and receive instruction. Do not, therefore, "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Never without excuse, turn your backs upon the house of God and upon the ordinances of the gospel. Consider, "the time is short." Soon you will close your eyes in death, and your state of probation come to a final period. And O remember, that you, and your minister, must one day meet at the tribunal of the infinite Judge. Then, O then, if you have faithfully improved your privileges, if you have repented of your sins and embraced the Saviour, you shall give up your account with joy. But if, after having been favored with the invitations, the calls, and warnings of the gospel, you are at last found in impenitence and sin, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you. Who among all the millions of the wretched, can have a deeper place in hell, than those who perish from under the gospel! May God bless to you the instructions of his word, may you be found among those, "Who are washed, who are sanctified, who are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" and at last, may you join that blessed company, around the throne, who shall say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory."

I cannot close this discourse, without calling the attention of this whole assembly, to the solemn scenes that await us all. My hearers, you are all hastening to the grave, and to the world of spirits. In time, you form characters for a long eternity. Soon you

will all be in the world of glory, or in the world of woe. Soon you will surround the throne of God, and unite in the song of Moses and the Lamb, or lift up your eyes in torments, where is weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Are you then prepared for the solemn scenes that await you? Are you prepared to die the death of the righteous? Are you prepared to enter upon the inheritance with the saints in light? Answer these enquiries, my hearers, in view of that tribunal, from which there is no appeal. May ministers and people be found faithful unto death, then we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. AMEN.

THE CHARGE TO THE PASTOR,

BY THE

REV. ELIJAH PARSONS,

Of East-Haddam.

WE who are ministers of the gospel, do none of us pretend to any superior or spiritual authority over each other. We openly profess that we can neither communicate any extraordinary gifts nor receive them from men. We believe that it is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, to qualify his servants, incline their hearts to engage in his work, and to give to his people pastors after his own heart. But we are bound to pursue the order he has prescribed, to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and preserve the fellowship of the churches. We therefore according to scriptural example, and apostolic authority, are met together this day, to recognize the solemn designation of our brother to the gospel ministry in this place, and the interesting relation now avowed between him and this church and people.

He having been honorably discharged from the obligation he was under, to serve the interest of the Redeemer in another part of the vineyard; and having taken the oversight of this church and people; will permit me to admonish him of the solemn charge committed to his trust.

Take heed, brother, to the ministry that you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it with fidelity. Feed this flock of God over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer. Preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. Shun not to declare all the counsel of God, so far as it is revealed in the inspired writings. Be careful to know the state of this people, and adapt your instructions both in public and private to their particular circumstances. Warn the wicked—instruct the ignorant—comfort the feeble-minded—bind up the broken-hearted—and endeavor to promote their growth in faith, love, humility, and every other grace. Administer the sacraments of the New-Testament, Baptism and the Lord's Supper to all to whom they belong. Dispense the discipline of God's house, when there may be occasion for it; but take care that it be done with meekness, candor, prudence, and impartiality. Give yourself to prayer as well as to reading and meditation: pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, for yourself and your people also: and watch thereunto with perseverance. Be an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.

We give you this charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before his Son Jesus Christ, to whom you must render an account in the day of his appearing to judge the world in righteousness. If you ask with solicitous concern "who is sufficient for these things?" be careful that you be not discouraged nor sink in your mind—put on the whole armour of God—war a good warfare—be faithful to the death and you will receive a crown of life, which the Lord the righteous Judge will bestow in that day upon all them that love his appearing.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE

REV. MR. HOVEY,

Of Saybrook.

IN the primitive ministers of Christ evidently existed a strong desire for the salvation of the souls of men. To spread abroad the gospel, which brings life and immortality to light, they were willing to travel around the world, to expose them-

selves to dangers and perils of every kind, and to sacrifice temporal wealth, worldly honors, and personal ease.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles exhibited in himself an illustrious example of the true spirit of the gospel ministry. Sensible of the hardened and blinded state of his own nation, it was his *heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel that they might be saved.* Receiving much personal abuse from the Jews, after his conversion to christianity, instead of seeking to revenge his wrongs, or retaliate for his injuries, with no small portion of the spirit of his divine master, he could pray for his enemies, and even *wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.*

As all the faithful ministers of Christ have drunk into the same spirit, although possessed of different gifts and zeal, they are actuated by an ardent desire for the future welfare of the souls of men. Such a desire is connected with that spirit of universal benevolence and good will to men, which is essentially involved in the character of God's children, and is the result of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost upon their hearts;—it arises from a sense of the worth of souls, as immortal, capable of endless happiness, or endless misery;—and from a supreme regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose honor is so much involved in the salvation of men.

Possessing the true spirit of his station, the minister of Christ will feel himself impelled to action. It will be, not merely the desire of his heart, but his prayer to God, the fountain of all saving influence, that the souls of men might be saved. He will aim to make to his hearers a faithful and affectionate declaration of the gospel of Christ, *reproving, rebuking, and exhorting them, with all long-suffering and doctrine;* at the same time endeavoring to become an *ensample to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;* that when the chief shepherd shall appear, he may not only receive to himself a crown of glory, that will not fade away, but *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, with exceeding joy.*

When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars in the church, perceived the grace that was given unto Paul, discovering in him the true spirit of the gospel ministry, they gave to him and to Barnabas *the right hand of fellowship*, that they might go unto the heathen publicly acknowledged as ministers of Jesus Christ.

Did I not hope and believe that you, Sir, who are now installed pastor of the flock of Christ in this place, possess some portion of the spirit, which appeared so illustrious in the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and which is so bright an ornament in a minister of Christ, my feelings would be far different on this occasion from what they now are. But, Sir, *I am persuaded better things of you, things that accompany salvation,* trust-

ing that your heart is engaged in the great work to which you are consecrated—a work designed to promote the salvation of souls. Actuated by these feelings, according to the example of the primitive ministers of Christ, and by the direction of this ecclesiastical council, I now give you the right hand of christian and ministerial fellowship. It is not an empty, unmeaning ceremony. You are hereby acknowledged to be a regular minister of Christ, and cordially welcomed to this part of the vineyard of our common Lord. Freely do we promise to afford you all the assistance, support, and counsel in our power; and we shall expect and gladly receive the same expressions of christian and ministerial affection from you in return; devoutly praying that we may *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.*

In desiring the *office of a bishop* you have desired *a good work.* The Lord hath been pleased in his providence, heretofore, to grant you the desire of your heart—*to account you faithful, putting you into the ministry;* and hath now set you to be a watchman upon this part of the *walls* of his *Jerusalem.* Here then you are now called to labor for Christ—to *watch for souls.* May you watch with a solemn sense of the account you must hereafter render to your Lord and Master. May you realize the interesting consequences which will follow from your present pastoral relation. Look around, Sir, and behold how many souls are now committed to your charge, each of which is precious beyond expression; the everlasting life, or death of which, is materially depending on the wisdom, the fidelity, and the zeal of your labors! If your instructions, if your reproofs, if your example, if your prayers can prevent it, let not one of these immortal souls perish.

Your experience has taught you that the gospel ministry is attended with trials; you are apprised also of its consolations. Shall we give way to despondency in this work, seeing our Lord hath said, for the support and encouragement of his ministers, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world —be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life?*—May you, Sir, on this occasion, to the solemnity of which your feelings are tenderly alive, renewedly give yourself to God. May you feel an increasing desire for the salvation of souls, inciting you to action for their everlasting good—a desire arising from a sense of the worth of souls, and from a saving love to Christ. May the *arms of your hands be made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.* Possessing the true spirit of your station, may you not refrain from *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* AMEN.

A CHARGE,

ADDRESSED TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

OF THE THIRD ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY IN LYME,

At the Installation of the Rev. Josiah Hawes, Nov. 23, 1815.

BY FREDERICK WILLIAM HOTCHKISS, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN SAYBROOK.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord,

IN the bereaved state of this part of the vineyard of our Redeemer, you have been the subject of many ascending prayers to Heaven, from the ministry, and the saints in the christian church.

Those prayers have been heard, and are, this day, answered.

Behold, now, the man of your choice. We present before you him, whom "*the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, has designated to set over this congregation, to go out before you, and to go in before you; and to lead you out, and to bring you in; that you be not as sheep without a shepherd.*"*

He has been solemnly consecrated by prayer, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; and you have heard the holy charge administered to him, to be faithful:—a charge too weighty for mortal man to bear, unless buoyed up by the power of Omnipotence.

Having charged him to be faithful in the ministry committed to him, we have a charge for this church and people, in the spiritual relation now formed.

When the church in the wilderness were called to contend with their enemies, their leader ascended the mount to pray. As he continued long in this holy exercise, his hands became weary, and they fell; but he had assistants with him, who came forward, and stayed up his hands.§ Like these, you are to conduct towards your spiritual leader, whose whole life is to be devoted in prayer, on this holy mount, for the church.

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*Num. xxvii. 16, 17. §Exod. xvii. 12.

While you are warring with Amalek, he is to wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant for you.—We need the prayers of the church.—"*Brethren, pray for us.*" Stay up the hands of Moses on the mount, for they may become weary in your service. Oh! how much depends on a praying people for a useful ministry; and oh! what immense blessings, temporal and spiritual, are suspended on the united prayers of the ministry and church!

But while we charge you to pray for him, forget not the duty of acting forth that spirit of prayer in your conduct towards him. Cheerfully fulfil your covenant for his temporal support; and remember that they who serve "*at the altar, must live of the altar;* and that while they minister to you *in spiritual things, it is not hard that they reap of your carnal things.*"—He brings an order from the King of Heaven; it must never be protested; it must be faithfully paid; "*for the laborer is worthy of his hire.*"—He is charged to read, meditate and pray, and "*give himself wholly*" to the ministry: but how can this be done, without the supply of his temporal wants?—Worldly embarrassments are almost fatal to the ministry. The Lord's people were the Levites' inheritance, in the ancient church. They were scattered among the tribes of Israel, without possessions like their brethren, because the people and their tithes were to be their portion.—Heaven has wisely continued the same orderings of his providence, in the christian church; that the ministry be not entangled with the cares of this life; but with a single mind, be devoted to the spiritual concerns of the flock of God. They must have leisure for study; and there must be preparations for the service of the altar.—"*Beaten oil must be brought into the sanctuary of the Lord, to give pure light: and no unhallowed fire may be offered* in the holy place."

Experience has long proved that extemporaneous efforts, without study, are not profitable to a people, but for a short time.—They may please, they may enrapture for the moment, but they are like the meteor in the sky, at which we gaze with admiration, but while it attracts, it expires and is forever gone: there is no oil to feed it; how then can you expect the light to be supported?—You have juster sentiments than to expect a useful ministry without the requisite preparations; and we entertain no doubt that your covenant will be faithfully performed, that the ministry may not be embarrassed by worldly cares, and prevented from the duties of the sacred office.

Forget not, that while the minister is set as an example to the flock, you are not to expect perfection.—An Apostle hath said, "*we are men of like passions with you.*"—We need your candor and charity, as well as your prayers.—To publish and exaggerate the failings of others is always unchristian, but to spread reports unfavorable to the ministry, is injuring his use-

fulness, and striking at the dearest interests of the people: for the moral and religious happiness of the flock are intimately blended with the dignity attached to the Christian ministry.—For your own good, and that of your children, for your temporal peace and spiritual prospects, we do solemnly charge you to be very tender in your regards to the holy office.

Fathers! this is the Elder set over you in the Lord, who is to feed the flock of God.—Children! this is your spiritual father, who is to pray for you, and carry the lambs in his arms to the shepherd of souls.—And, oh Zion! this is thy wedding-day. The marriage union is solemnized; the covenant is sealed, and is now recording in heaven. The solemnities of the day are closing, and attending angels are mounting on high, and flying with the report to glory.—Will you be faithful to the covenant? A crowd of witnesses, this day, attest the solemnity of your covenant transactions, and will one day meet you in the court of heaven.—Yes, we must all meet there; and may it be, as witnesses of mutual fidelity.—I see before me some of the lambs of this flock: I remember the solemn season when they offered themselves to the Lord. I read to them the holy covenant. It was the Pentecostal day of this Zion;—what sacred tenderness of feelings! what holy fear! what elevated affections were then visible in every face!—You cannot forget the memorable solemnity: and while you remember, we charge you to be faithful. To day, the Redeemer sends his servant to watch over you, and pray for you; may you, with your fathers, be faitnful to the covenant now ratified, and be faithful to him placed over you in the Lord.

While you support him in magnifying his office, we charge this people to take heed how ye hear.—Forget not the assembling of yourselves together; and forget not your families when you go up to the hill of Zion.—Bring your dear lambs with you, that they may feed in these green pastures, and drink the pure milk of the word from the sanctuary. Oh! how pleasant it is to walk together, and take sweet counsel, in the place where the shepherd meets his flock.—Scarce any attentions do more strengthen the hands, and encourage the heart of a christian minister, than readiness and engagedness to hear the word.—A failure here will greatly diminish his usefulness. A minister cannot preach to naked walls and empty seats.—The example of the fathers will influence the children: you will not therefore admit slight inconveniences to detain you from the sabbath and the sanctuary.—The word of truth will, by some, be opposed; and by others evaded through absence: we therefore charge you to be willing to hear truth though it wound you.—Conviction must precede conversion: and neither a genuine conviction nor real change of heart is to be expected, but through the word plainly preached, and affectionately enforced on the hearer's conscience. "*Of his*

own will, begat he us, with the word of truth."*—By your example therefore embolden the ministry to speak openly, whether others will hear, or whether they forbear.—God will never leave you, while you are faithful to the ministrations of his word: for it is written,—that in every place where He records his name, he will there meet, and bless his people.

It is but as yesterday, and we saw you weeping; and Zion here was covered with sackcloth.—The minister was called from you, and had finished his stewardship;—the ancient sanctuary, where your fathers worshipped, was falling; and the elders, with the faithful, seemed to be but very few: your hands were weakened, and your hearts began to despond: you pointed to the grave of your deceased father, hung your harps on the willows, and wept as you remembered Zion.—Still you loved the gates of the sanctuary; and the prayers of the faithful ascended amidst the tears of the saints. Those prayers arose for a memorial before God.—He heard them, and soon bid Zion rise from the dust and sing his praise.—Three successive tokens of his love were shewn you; and those were so unquestionably the finger of heaven, that unbelief itself stood abashed.—The first of these was the effusion of his spirit and grace, accompanied with a happy accession to this church, before unparalleled. The prayers of the good father, deceased, have borne fruit while he rested from his labors.—This first token of the Redeemer's love was followed by a second.—The desponding hearts of numbers were animated, and the hands of the faithful were strengthened to undertake a great and good work of re-building the walls of Zion. And this day presents us a new sanctuary, and a new altar erected to the Lord.—This second token of his love, in your weak and broken situation, exceeded the expectations of multitudes, but not the faith of the saints.—To finish the demonstration of heaven's propitious remembrances of this Zion, the third token of his love is, this hour, displayed, and an ascension gift, from the Redeemer, is now presented before you.

How has the scene changed!—We will take up the harp from the willows, and the suspended song shall break forth into the Redeemer's praise.—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord hath arisen upon thee."—"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, oh Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, oh Jerusalem, the holy city!"—"Open your gates, oh Zion! that the King of glory may come in."—"Who is this King of glory?"—"The Lord of Hosts; He is the King of glory!"—"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces; for my brethren and my companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee."

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*James i. 18.

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